

Rupicapra - Conservation and increase of the Abruzzo chamois - *Rupicapra ornata* - in "NATURA 2000 Sites" of the Gran Sasso

LIFE97 NAT/IT/004143

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Project description:

Background

The Abruzzo chamois (*Rupicapra ornata*), a priority species according to the Habitats Directive, has a 500-strong population in the Abruzzo National Park and, thanks to a recent LIFE project, has been re-introduced to the Maiella and Gran Sasso-Monti della Laga national parks.

The Gran Sasso park had a nucleus of 25-30 individuals at the start of the project, insufficient to guarantee a minimum viable population (MVP). On top of this comes the risk of a possible epidemic and the disturbance inflicted on the chamois by tourism, still poorly regulated as the national park was only established recently. Cases of poaching affecting the chamois have also been recorded, which highlights the necessity of having a more effective wardening service.

Objectives

The project focused on two sites inside the park, where the principal actions would be carried out. The first target was to boost the numbers making up the chamois nucleus to ward off the threat entailed by possible epidemics. Through a monitoring programme and a series of thorough veterinary studies, an up-to-date picture of the chamois' demographic and health status was to be obtained.

To control the causes of excessive disturbance, the most important and vulnerable areas would be identified and tourist flows and livestock grazing regulated on the basis of the outcome. The park wardening service was to be beefed up sufficiently to ensure application of the regulations and to be able to prevent poaching. To reduce disturbance to a minimum, visitors interested in

observing chamois would be accompanied by specialized nature guides.

The project also foresaw re-introducing a further 10-15 chamois to the park. These animals would be taken from the Abruzzo National Park, or from the two wildlife reserves established on the Gran Sasso by the previous LIFE project, where they had repeatedly bred.

Results

The project achieved all its objectives. Results in terms of nature conservation were significant, considering the stabilization, growth and expansion of the chamois nuclei.

Among the actions carried out and the results obtained there were:

- Preparatory course of 120 hours to train 15 nature guides specialized in chamois watching.
- Realisation of 8 hiking paths, with a total length of 4,8 km, for Chamois watching. The paths were identified on the basis of the minimum disturbance for the species, analysing the distribution of the grassland and pasture types sought after by the species (i.e. *Festuco-Trifolietum thalii* or *Avena versicolor* and *Koeleria splendens* association).
- Sanitary analysis of the Chamois population did not identify significant problems. Parasitological analyses evidenced the presence of a parasite of domestic herds, suggesting the need of a sanitary management of the pasture areas. Data on health status of domestic herds were collected by the local veterinary service and inserted in the data bank of the Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale in Teramo.
- Genetic analysis were carried out to assess the genetic variability of the Gran Sasso population, which was confirmed to be low.
- Reintroduction of 8 specimens of chamois, and placing a radio tracking collar on 7.
- Improving and restoration of two faunistic areas for the Chamois in the National Park were completed .
- Monitoring of the population. Four Chamois groups were present in the Gran Sasso National Park at the time of the project. An increase of the known chamois population has been ascertained, up to a total observed number of 71 specimens and an estimate of the total population of 76, with an increase of 10 individuals from the previous census of 1999. The experience gathered in censusing the Gran Sasso chamois population has been exported to the Maiella National Park for the census of that chamois population.
- Analysis of chamois distribution through the year and of the territorial preferences was carried out. Preliminary analysis on the effects of tourist disturbance underlined that, more than the total number of tourists, was their behaviour to affect the chamois groups.

Environmental issues addressed:

Themes

Species - Mammals

Keywords

mountainous area, ecotourism, population dynamics, introduction of animal species, natural park, monitoring system, environmental training

Target EU Legislation

- Nature protection and Biodiversity
- Directive 92/43 - Conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora- Habitats Directiv ...

Target species

Rupicapra pyrenaica ornata

Target Habitat types

- 8210 - Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation
- 9210 - Apennine beech forests with Taxus and Ilex

Natura 2000 sites

SCI IT7110202

Gran Sasso

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Beneficiaries:

Coordinator Ente Parco Nazionale del Gran Sasso e Monti della Laga

Type of organisation Park-Reserve authority

Description

The National Park Gran Sasso - Monti della Laga covers a surface of 150.000 hectares, one of the largest parks in Italy. The Park includes three mountain groups - the chain of Gran Sasso d'Italia, the Laga massif and the Monti Gemelli - where the presence of the highest peak of the Apennines, the Corno Grande (2912 meters) stands out.

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Administrative data:

Project reference	LIFE97 NAT/IT/004143
Duration	01-JAN-1998 to 31-MAY -2001
Total budget	308,875.94 €
EU contribution	185,325.56 €
Project location	Abruzzo(Italia)

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Read more:

Brochure	Title: I camosci nel futuro. Year: 1998 Editor: Parco Nazionale Gran Sasso-Monti della Laga
Leaflet	Title: Il camoscio d'Abruzzo Author: Marina Rivera Year: 2000 Editor: Parco Nazionale Gran Sasso-Monti della Laga No of pages: 8
Poster	Title: poster. Year: 1999 Editor: Parco Nazionale Gran Sasso-Monti della Laga

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